

MINUTES
Veneta Economic Development Committee
Wednesday, March 9, 2016 – 2:00 p.m.

Veneta Administrative Center, 88184 8th Street, Veneta, Oregon

Present: Jason Alansky, Linda Boothe, Thomas Cotter, Dave D'Avanzo, Ryan Frome, Len Goodwin (Chair), Gina Haley-Morrell, Charles Ruff, Herb Vloedman (Vice Chair).

Absent: n/a

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Claudia Denton, Economic Development Specialist; Karen Stewart, Local Government Affairs Director (CenturyLink); Stephanie Pinn, Manager of Engineering and Construction (CenturyLink); Chris Silva, Engineer (CenturyLink); Jason Johannesen, Operations Manager (CenturyLink).

Audience: Tracy Robinson, resident and business owner (Veneta Family Dental).

1. Call to Order

- a. Chair Len Goodwin called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment

- a. No public comment.

3. Administrative

- a. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Linda Boothe made a motion to approve the minutes from February 10, 2016. Ryan Frome seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 6-0.

Jason Alansky, Thomas Cotter, and Charles Ruff arrived shortly after the minutes were approved.

4. Implementation of Action Plan

- a. Karen Stewart and Engineering Staff from CenturyLink
Len Goodwin introduced the guests from CenturyLink, and said he had invited them to present on the state of telecommunications and to discuss what the Committee could do to encourage the development of more, higher speed internet service in the area.

The Committee members and CenturyLink staff introduced themselves. CenturyLink staff in attendance included Karen Stewart, Local Government Affairs Director; Stephanie Pinn, Manager of Engineering and Construction; Chris Silva, Engineer; and Jason Johannesen, Operations Manager.

CenturyLink staff gave an update on the state of CenturyLink services in the Veneta area, in particular on the availability of fiber service within Veneta. Staff explained the opportunities and obstacles for upgrading service, and that they are in the process of replacing their copper wiring with fiber which will take time. Fiber is currently available at a limited number of locations but it's possible to expand in a number of areas. Currently it is too cost-prohibitive for a wide upgrade of service.

In response to a question about fiber availability in the Northeast Employment Center, Chris Silva said that since it's an undeveloped greenfield, the contractor or developer would just need to call and schedule an appointment to discuss a plan to introduce fiber during construction.

Silva said it is also possible to provide aerial feed in addition to underground, and that the aerial cables would be inconspicuous and attached to existing cables.

Karen Stewart said it is much cheaper and easier to provide service to individual homes before construction is completed.

Stephanie Pinn said she and Jason Johannesen had met with Hayden Homes during construction of Applegate Landing (Phase 3) to partner with them and market fiber service but Hayden Homes were not interested. Ric Ingham said the meetings may have been more successful if they had included City staff in the conversation. Pinn said that they had talked to Kyle Shauer, Veneta's Public Works Director, but were still unsuccessful. Jason Johannesen said that since the homes were constructed without the necessary wiring and equipment installed, the individual homeowners will need to contact CenturyLink. One homeowner had already gone through the process and had sent Hayden Homes the bill. Since then, Hayden Homes has been more cooperative.

Ric Ingham said that the City may want to consider amending the Building Code. Stephanie Pinn said it would be very helpful to partner during the developers' permitting process. Len Goodwin said it could be a standard building requirement that new homes be constructed with the equipment and wiring necessary, even in areas where it's presently not feasible to provide the actual service.

Karen Stewart said that while they obviously represent their own interests, it would be laying the groundwork for all telecommunications providers, which would alleviate costs and time for both homeowners and service providers.

Herb Vloedman asked to discuss the areas with existing commercial buildings and other brownfield areas including the West Lane Shopping Center, Fern Ridge Center, and West Broadway. Ric Ingham said that First Call Resolution in the West Lane Shopping Center already has fiber through a different provider. Chris Silva said the equipment and service is available at the Veneta office (25042 W Broadway Ave.), and costs to connect would depend on distance from the nearest fiber wiring. He said if anyone is interested they can call him to schedule an inspection.

Jason Johannesen said that CenturyLink is reviewing which communities to expand service in through the Connect America Fund (CAF), and while Veneta is a potential candidate there are no guarantees if or when CAF funding would allow for CenturyLink upgrades and expansion in Veneta.

Ryan Frome asked about Franchise Agreements, and if that meant that CenturyLink are the only service providers allowed. Karen Stewart said that the telecommunications agreements are non-exclusive, meaning that cities are free to enter agreements with multiple service providers. She said the purpose of a

Franchise Agreement is to allow the service provider to have facilities in the right-of-way, to pay the city for doing so, and to establish terms and agreements including permitting and standards. Len Goodwin said one alternative to Franchise Agreements is to have all the requirements and standards in the municipal code, and simply have a licensing process to allow service providers to operate.

Ryan Frome asked if it was residences or businesses driving the demand for service. Karen Stewart said that it's both, but different features are more residential-driven or business-driven.

Herb Vloedman asked if there were any commercial areas with service faster than 1.5 Mbps. Jason Johannesen said yes, higher speeds are available and existing but due to the nature of copper wiring, it is highly dependent on the business's distance from the node.

Ryan Frome asked if there is a limitation that Veneta has at this time, particularly if there are businesses not interested in locating in Veneta due to service speeds. Jason Johannesen said yes, as there are limitations in every town, but there are options for every limitation.

Len Goodwin asked if it was possible for the City to fund part of the costs of the extension of fiber in order to make costs more feasible for the business community. Karen Stewart said in theory there are opportunities for city-company partnerships and CenturyLink is always interested in that. However, in reality it's challenging to do so as CenturyLink is a publicly-traded company and are bound to various financial regulations, particularly in terms of liens. Ric Ingham said that it is in the interest of the City to be able to market the Northeast Employment Center as "fiber to the property" and would be willing to have a financial incentive for CenturyLink to do so. Karen Stewart said that would definitely be of interest and Chris Silva would be the best contact person to discuss that and see what the options are.

CenturyLink provided business cards and contact information. Karen Stewart said Chris Silva would likely be the best contact person to discuss questions and comments, and said this meeting was helpful to them. She said it is always easier to plan and budget well ahead of time especially since the budget is set before the year starts, and thus it is good to be aware of the city's plans for the future.

Len Goodwin said it seems like it would be beneficial to require new construction or significant remodels to install the necessary higher-quality wiring and equipment inside the home, so that when the service providers are ready to expand and upgrade service they just need to upgrade to the exterior of the home.

Len Goodwin thanked CenturyLink staff for their time.

b. Open House Follow-up and Suggested Work Plan Items

Claudia Denton asked the Committee to discuss and develop next steps after the Open House and how action items may fit into the Committee's work plan.

Len Goodwin said it was important to communicate what the Committee learned at the Open House and what the Committee wants to recommend, and asked the Committee about their thoughts on how to proceed. Herb Vloedman said it is

important to keep a presence, with newsletters and otherwise.

Ric Ingham asked the Committee to complete an exercise to prioritize next steps. After a voting session, the Committee ranked the follow-up items as follows:

High priority:

- Highway 126 problems
- Shortage of quality, affordable commercial and office space
- Problematic downtown (away from Highway, undeveloped, not visible, etc.) and Signage/visibility (of the City, downtown, Farmers Market, businesses, etc.)
- High development/permit fees (both residential and commercial)

Medium priority:

- No City focus point/driver for business, visitors, activity (“brand”)
- Need for networking/collaboration opportunities
- Need for incubator spaces
- Ideas on what services/businesses would do well or are needed in the area

Low priority:

- Role of Farmers Market

Ric Ingham said this prioritization will help guide the Committee’s newsletter and work plan. He asked Claudia Denton to add these rankings onto the Action Prioritization sheet.

c. Suggested Newsletter Articles

Claudia Denton asked the Committee to provide recommendations on articles so that she could provide a draft newsletter at the April Committee meeting. Len Goodwin said he would like to have the newsletter ready before the next meeting if possible. Ric Ingham said that the Business Retention & Expansion program is very time consuming at this time, and consequently the more content that the Committee members can provide the better, leaving staff to do formatting. Len Goodwin said he could provide a “Message from the Chair” article and a brief about various Committee meeting guests.

Claudia Denton described the ideas for newsletter articles based on previous meetings. Open House overview and System Development Charges (SDC fees) were at the top of the list. Denton said that researching SDC fees in other comparable cities in the area was already part of her work plan. Len Goodwin said that he would write an article about SDC fees as he had experience teaching about SDC fees. Claudia said she would provide the actual fees and how Veneta compares.

Ric Ingham said to target the release of the newsletter for mid-April. Ingham said he would write an article about Highway 126, what has happened in the last five years, and what the City is doing to move things along.

Claudia Denton asked who would be willing to write a “Business in the News” brief and who would be willing to be featured in the “Profiles about Committee Members”. Len Goodwin said that Ryan Frome had already provided profile information to him. Gina Haley-Morrell said she could also be featured.

Claudia Denton asked about events to include in the newsletter. Len Goodwin asked if there were any public events scheduled for the Business Retention & Expansion program (Veneta Business Connect). Claudia Denton said no dates were scheduled at this time.

5. Program/Project Updates

a. Urban Renewal Redevelopment Tool Kit: Presentation and Review

Ric Ingham gave a brief overview and history of the Redevelopment Tool Kit and its relationship to the Downtown Master Plan and Urban Renewal Agency. He asked for Committee members to provide comments to Claudia either during the meeting or via email.

Herb Vloedman asked about the scoring system. Ric Ingham said it had been tested informally, and that two businesses on West Broadway were interested in applying.

Claudia Denton presented the Redevelopment Tool Kit materials and asked if the Committee had questions or comments. Ric Ingham explained that the amount of information requested of the applicant is reflective of the grant amount they are requesting. If an applicant is requesting a small grant, they would not need to dedicate as much time or resources as applicants who are requesting larger grants.

After brief discussion with Committee members, Denton said she would likely remove the scoring matrix in the Business Application.

Ric Ingham said there are also two more economic incentive components that staff is working on. Claudia Denton will also update the Business Assistance Fund Loan-Grant Program as well as create a City-wide incentive program.

b. New BR&E Name: Veneta Business Connect

Claudia Denton said the new name for the Business Retention & Expansion program was decided after reviewing comments and suggestions from Committee members, and then reviewing the options during a staff leadership meeting. The name "Veneta Business Connect" is local, succinct, and self-explanatory.

6. Other

a. Ric Ingham gave a brief update on the status of Veneta Business Connect and thanked the Committee members participating in the visitation team.

b. Ric Ingham said the next Committee meeting would have several guests and presentations, and could possibly run long.

7. Next Meeting

a. The next meeting was confirmed for Wednesday April 13th, 2016 at 2 p.m. with a regular meeting schedule of the second Wednesday of the month.

8. Adjourn

a. Chair Len Goodwin adjourned the meeting at 3:47 p.m.